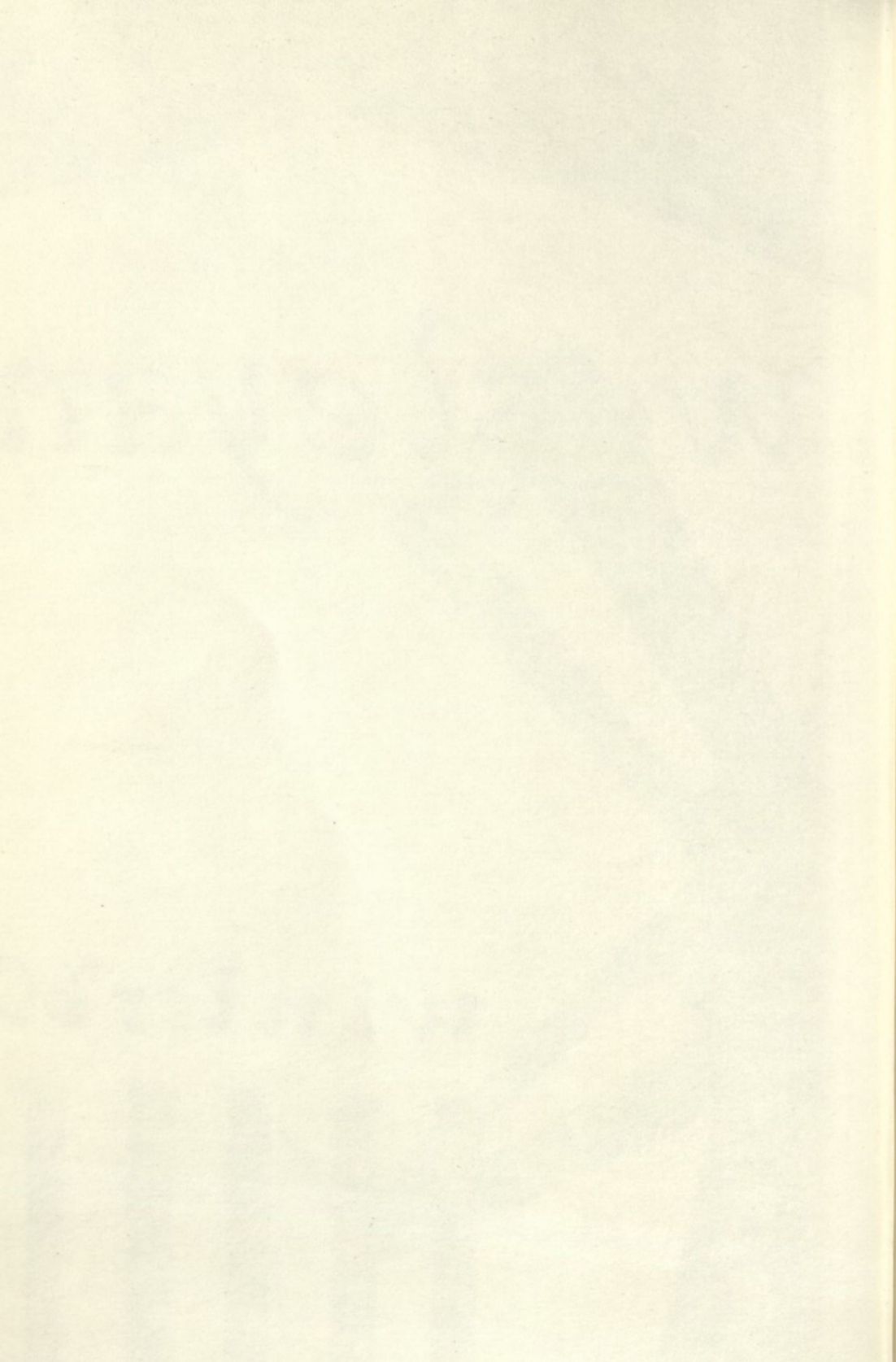




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# THE WESLEYAN



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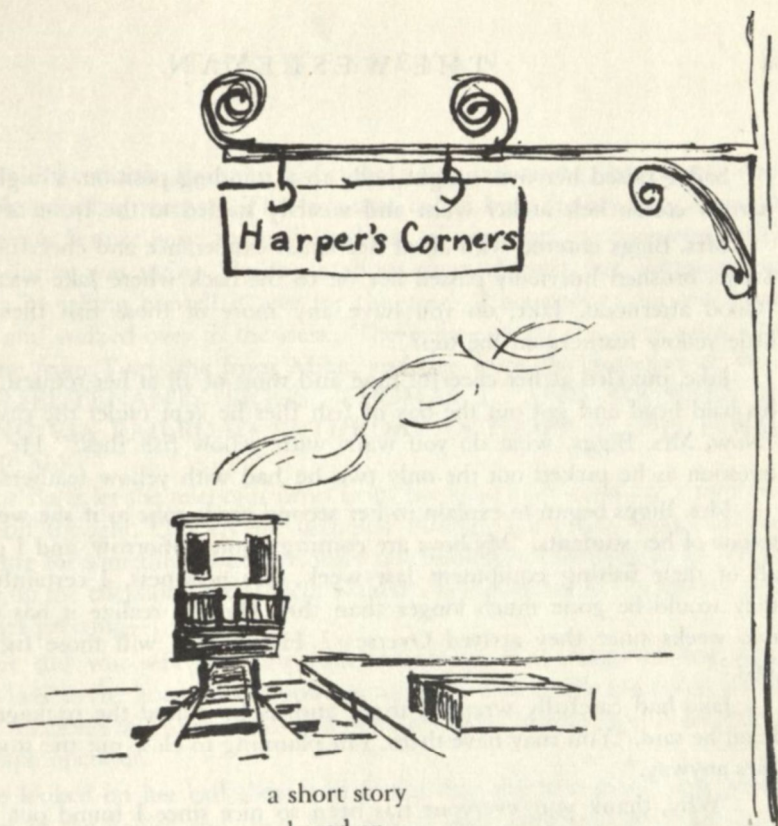
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# H O M E C O M I N G



a short story  
based on  
*The Wife of Usher's Well*  
*a popular English Ballad*  
BY HARRIET L. HOLLAND

As the short, ably built gray haired school teacher crossed the main street of Harper's Corners the clerk inside of Lionel's Hardware Store turned away from the window and shook his head slightly. He had watched Mrs. Biggs, or Ma Biggs as most of the town called the second grade teacher, hurriedly weave in and out of the stores on the opposite side of the street.

"Her son's bodies are due here tomorrow afternoon on the four-forty," the old man mumbled half under his breath.

"What was that you said Jake?" irritably asked his wife; then not giving him a chance to answer, "How many times have I told you to talk so's I can hear you?"

"I just said, her son's bodies are due in town tomorrow on the four-forty and here she is actin' as if this was a regular day." Jake gave this explanation with his normal tone of slow, calm composure and turned around in time to see Mrs. Biggs approach the front door. "You wait on her Sadyc, you know how I hate to wait on women."

Sadye raised her over-weight body to a standing position, straightened the narrow cotton belt at her waist and wearily started to the front of the store.

Mrs. Biggs entered with all of her usual exuberance and cheerfully greeted Sadye, brushed hurriedly passed her on to the back where Jake was standing. "Good afternoon, Jake, do you have any more of those fish flies with the little yellow feathers on the top?"

Jake, puzzled at her cheerful tone and most of all at her request, scratched his bald head and got out the box of fish flies he kept under the cash register. "Now, Mrs. Biggs, what do you want with yellow fish flies?" He asked the question as he picked out the only two he had with yellow feathers.

Mrs. Biggs began to explain in her second-grade tone as if she were talking to one of her students, "My boys are coming home tomorrow, and I gave away all of their fishing equipment last week. My goodness, I certainly thought they would be gone much longer than this. Do you realize it has only been two weeks since they arrived Overseas? How much will those fish flies be, Jake?"

Jake had carefully wrapped them and as he placed the package into her hand he said, "You may have them, I'm planning to close out the stock on fish flies anyway."

"Why, thank you, everyone has been so nice since I found out Tom and Mike are coming home. Last night Mr. Hicks called and said it would be allright for me to take the rest of the week off, and Mrs. Duggen baked a cake and brought over. I guess she knew I wouldn't have time to bake before they got here." Before she turned and went out she looked toward Sadye who by this time had come to the back and seated herself on the stool again, and offered as an explanation for not staying to chat longer, "I have to go home and get the feather bed out of the attic, the boys always liked for me to make their beds with it at the first sign of fall." After making this statement she turned and left the store.

Sadye turned to her husband and excitedly commanded him to call Doctor Batts. He instantly obeyed the command and in a matter of minutes was talking to the doctor. He related what had just happened in the store and told the doctor that the only way Mrs. Biggs had acted unusual was when she talked about her sons. As soon as the conversation ended Doctor Batts closed his office and immediately went to the white two story frame house Mrs. Biggs had lived in since her marriage. The front door was open, but the house was empty. Doctor Batts entered the house and proceeded to the parlor where he seated himself in the big easy chair. "Poor woman," he thought, "it must be pretty rough on her to lose both sons at the same time so soon after her husband's death. No wonder Jake said she was acting strangely, but for her to be so confident and . . ." at this point Doctor Batts' eyes shifted to the desk. It was an old fashioned one with a high back and shelves with



glass doors. The maple shone to a bright finish indicating that a soft dust rag had been applied recently. The fact that it had been freshly waxed wasn't the interesting feature now, the yellow sheets of paper on the top were really what the doctor was seeing. Feeling a slight tinge of guilt, but counteracting the feeling by telling himself it was for the good of his patient, he rose from the chair and walked over to the desk. The yellow sheets of paper were telegrams—one from Tom, one from Mike, and one from the Secretary of War saying: "LIEUTENANTS BIGGS, THOMAS L. AND MICHAEL R. ARRIVING VIA RAILROAD SATURDAY OCTOBER 31, 1943, FOUR-FORTY P. M."

Doctor Batts let the telegram drop from his hand and stood for a moment in profound thought. Quickly he searched through the other things on the desk looking for something, but obviously not finding it. Glancing at his watch he picked up the telephone and dialed, waited a few minutes for an answer and after a brief greeting—

"Millie did you send the telegram informing Mrs. Biggs of her sons' death out here to the house or did you phone her?" The whole town had found out about the death of Tom and Mike and all the other information from Millie, the telegraph operator.

Millie looked on her call sheet and found that she had called only about the arrival of the bodies and then had sent it out; therefore, she must have given the other telegram to George to deliver, this she told the doctor.

Doctor Batts then asked, "What was the date on the death notice?"

"October twentieth" came the reply.

"Is George there now?" asked the doctor "and if he is let me speak to him."

"Lo" a deep husky voice came through the wire.

"George, this is Doctor Batts, did you work the night of October twentieth? It was a", he lifted his head to glance at the calendar, "Tuesday night."

"No sir, I never come to work on Tuesdays, and that night I remember because my relief never came, and I had a whole pile of telegrams to deliver on Wednesday."

The doctor's eyes widened slightly, "George, could one of those telegrams have gotten lost?"

"Sure could've doc," came the honest answer to this question. George was never one to think of what the consequences might be for losing a telegram.

"Thank you George," the doctor said and replaced the receiver on the body of the telephone.

Glimpsing out of the window, Doctor Batts saw Mrs. Biggs coming in her front gate. He went to the door. Mrs. Biggs pleased at seeing her friend there smiled and said, "Well Pete, who do you think is sick here?"

"Certainly not you, Martha." He tried to make his tone sound unconcerned, but one glance at Mrs. Biggs and he knew he had not succeeded.



"Come now Pete, why are you here? This isn't one of your pleasure visits." Mrs. Biggs had been able to sense the doctor's moods since the days they used to "court" in high school.

"Martha, come on in here and sit down." When she was seated on the sofa he continued. "How many telegrams have you gotten concerning Tom and Mike?"

"Only the one saying they would be home tomorrow." And then her tone changed, "Why, what's wrong?" She sounded alarmed.

"Martha, did you not get a telegram telling why they were coming home?"

"Pete, are they hurt or . . ." she did not finish the sentence, somehow she knew, something down inside, had she not felt it though one look at the doctor's face would have revealed the fact to her.

Martha Biggs sat there a few minutes, slowly feeling all the happiness of the last days drain from her body. She felt empty now, she wanted to cry, but she could not, there was no emotion left—none at all.

The next day, Saturday, October 31, 1943, she met the train. For a change it was on time, four-forty. The platform was empty except for the woman, the doctor and the Negro porter. The train stopped for five minutes, long enough to deposit two travel coffins and then it pulled out.

Tom and Mike Biggs were home.

## Rabbits' Autumn Run

*Through the meadow run the rabbits  
in a scampering  
scurry-hurry.*

*Through rustling grass—  
Leaping dead tree roots run the rabbits  
in a flurry  
hurry-scurry*

*With the turning of the green—  
With the turning of the green.*

—LLL



## Beautiful the Night

*Beautiful the night  
When the wind blows cold,  
And the timid bare branches  
Tremble . . .  
Beneath the icy gaze  
Of the mik-white moon.*

*And the dry, dead grass  
Hugs the earth  
And welcomes the warmth  
Of a crushing footstep.*

*Beautiful!  
And all the earth is crisp and clear,  
Dreading the coming day  
Of heat and suffocation.*

—Sheila Scott





## **"in the Beginning: End"**

*Water-smooth nakedness  
stretching as dogs stretch  
and hands away from a clap.*

*The first woman in a child's reach—  
the apple tempting.*

*Ugliness comes  
in flames of ice  
and stinging venom  
bringing childbed death.*

*The branch wrenched from the trunk  
splinters the roots—*

*Still brother against brother  
the stone of lead lifted*

*Still crouched in damnation  
trembling and naked  
under the shadow*

*of the vulture's wing—  
fumbling to cover naked breasts  
they claw curling in terror,  
shame knotting  
the stretch of the child's reach.*

*Come now to lay with me  
caresses to smooth  
and melt to warm honey  
wrinkles of shame—*

*soft as evening cricket sounds  
to taste the fruit of your mouth  
to hide in clouds of your hair  
to become water-smooth as one—  
Come lay with me.*

*Let us be hands folded in benediction.*

—LLL



# Route To Safety



By Robin Price

A thin, grey mist covered the floor of the valley and clung to the mountain peaks. The wind rushed among the gnarled remains of tree trunks. As the sun rose slowly, almost reluctantly in the east, a young man in tattered, dirty clothing emerged from the ruins of what had been a country church.

The young man looked at his surroundings and hung his head sadly. He was tall and muscular yet he looked as if it had been quite some time since he had eaten. His features were hidden by a beard but his deep blue eyes reflected suffering and sorrow.

"How long has it been since I have seen anyone?", he said aloud. "Surely someone must be around here."

He sat down on the battered remains of a church pew and for the first time since it had happened, recalled the events which had brought him to these surroundings.

David had been in Florida to investigate a job opening at one of the Government's new nuclear testing plants. They needed a young nuclear physicist to take charge of the atomic reactor.

When he had finished his business, David set out for South Carolina where he planned to visit with his fiancée before returning to his home in Connecticut.

As he drove through the coastal section of Georgia, the announcement came over his car radio.

"Unidentified planes have bombed and destroyed New York City. Everyone is urged to remain calm and seek safety away from large cities. Stay tuned to this station for further evacuation instructions."

The announcement momentarily stunned David and when he regained his composure he cried.

"My God! This can't be happening to us. We are supposed to be prepared for such an event. Oh, my God!"

He had to get somewhere where he could seek safety. He had to drive inland as far as his gas supply would take him, as the danger of radiation from the nearby water could be fatal. Maybe he could get to Beth. Her family would probably head for the mountains near her home.

Then he thought of the instructions the Defense Department had given all government scientists. In the event of an enemy attack or invasion, they were not to let it be known that they were scientists, as their lives would be in jeopardy.

Yes, David thought, the South Carolina mountains would be the safest place for him, if he could only get there.

His gas tank was almost full and took him as far as Athens, but he was still one hundred miles from Beth.

David had to leave his car there and try to make the rest of the trip on foot. As he went along his route, David passed others who were seeking safety. From some of these people he learned that Atlanta had been bombed. Later he saw some who had managed to live through that blast and heard about the total destruction and high loss of lives.

David pushed himself as much as he could, stopping only when he was too exhausted to continue. He was able to find very little to eat for most of the stores had been looted. Once in a while someone would share a piece of bread with him.

Each day had brought him closer to his destination and now on the sixth day since it had happened, he was in an area which he believed to be close to the Ashley's mountain cabin.

Last night he had made it as far as these church ruins. Perhaps he would find Beth today.

David stood up and once again examined his surroundings. He had no idea which way to go.

Then as if a mirage had appeared, David saw a girl about 1000 yards away, kneeling by a stream. He ran in her direction. Even if it were not Beth, it was another human, someone he could talk with.

As he neared the girl, she turned and started toward him. It was Beth. His route to safety had an end.



## FRANK JONES



*One painting in a gallery  
Genius of an artist's brush  
A simple black man, on a background of white.*

*Work-worn blue overalls  
Faded old black coat  
Head of hair all grizzled  
Grey from care and toils  
Face all worn and wrinkled  
But strong from worry and trouble  
These belong to the man—Frank Jones.*

*There he sits  
Hands clasped together  
Strong hands  
Strong hands that wouldn't shirk the job  
though it be hard.*

*What are you thinking, Frank Jones?  
What lies behind your eyes, so dark and stern?  
Why is your face so wrinkled in thought?*

*As you sit and ponder,  
Do you think of years of toil and backbreak?  
Do the struggles of your race hang so heavily on your bowed shoulders?*

*Time passes faster and faster  
yours is almost gone  
Look back, Frank Jones!  
Look back on all the good and bad your eyes have known.  
Time has left its mark, Frank Jones  
Consider it well.*

*—Ellen Weldon*



# *Cigars, Angels and Mr. Davis*

By Mary Margaret Woodward

Mr. Davis had always done things in a big way. He was never content unless he had the biggest and best of everything. When he married he chose someone with beauty, brains, and a fortune. The car which he drove was always the latest model in the big car line. His house, with its white columns and rooms filled with antiques, was often called the most beautiful house in Whitman. Many people of the community admired him for his ability to maintain the biggest and best of everything; but when he sank the family fortune in a cigar factory the general consensus was that he had bitten off more than he could chew.

A month passed after Mr. Davis had opened the factory. During that time the sales chart showed an initial upward leap and then a steady decline. Mr. Davis' personality began changing from the self-assured, carefree young businessman to the frustrated executive. He became introverted and moody. For hours at a time he would remain in a shell, oblivious of the outer world.

One afternoon Mr. Davis returned from the factory in one of his moods. He hastened past his wife in the kitchen without so much as a glance in her direction. His auburn hair was somewhat tousled and his coat hung carelessly over his left arm. He left a strong smell of cured tobacco in his wake.

Mrs. Davis followed the tobacco odor into the bedroom. There she found her husband stretched out on the four-poster bed, head propped against the headboard and eyes staring at the canopied top. His shoes lay beside the bed, where he had hastily slipped out of them. Mrs. Davis approached the bed and kissed her husband's forehead. "Hi, honey. Glad to see you at home so early."

"Umm," replied Mr. Davis, still lost in thought.

It worried Mrs. Davis to see her husband so completely wrapped up in himself. Determined to bring him out of his shell she shook his shoulder playfully. "Hey, don't I even rate a 'hello'?"

"Oh, hey June." Leaning forward he absently pecked her on the cheek.

"Jack, honey, come out of your dream world and help me. I've got a real first-rate problem."

Mr. Davis' glance absently followed his wife about the room as she straightened furniture here and there, chattering all the while. Her coal-black hair was pulled back loosely with a blue ribbon. Her fair skin and clear blue eyes were accentuated by a navy blue shirtwaist dress. A frilly white apron added the domestic touch.

"Elizabeth is having her baby sometime this month and I can't think of anything real original to give her. You know, she gave me that darling bottle bag when Janet was born; and Charlie gave you that red-and-gold baby blanket for football games. I've thought about a pearl necklace, but that doesn't seem

quite original enough. That's probably what it'll be though, darn it! I haven't a bit of originality."

"Umph! Maybe we'd better give them both cigars."

"Now, there's an idea! Why didn't I think of that before?"

Mr. Davis stared at his wife.

"Really, honey, it's a good idea. Couldn't you make a tiny, cigarette-type cigar for Elizabeth?"

"Oh June, be serious!"

"Oh, but I am being serious, Jack! I really think it would be cute to make tiny cigars for Elizabeth and regular-sized ones for Charlie. You could enclose them in glass cases like the ones we saw in Cuba. Why, they could be put on the shelf and kept for years."

"Who in the devil wants to keep a cigar for years?"

"But honey, these would be different! They'd have blue or pink outside leaves, according to whether the new baby's a boy or girl. Can't you imagine a blue or pink-leafed cigar in a glass case, cushioned by cotton of the same color? Of course there would be ribbons or angels or teddy bears on the glass case . . . Oh, it would be so darling!"

Mr. Davis couldn't refrain from laughing. His wife was so cute even if she was ridiculous sometimes. He leaned forward and pulled her toward him.

On the following day Mr. Davis sat in his office at the factory. It was closing time and the workers were filing past the door. They had received their weekly paychecks. White teeth flashed amid black faces as they laughed and joked about the coming weekend. Mr. Davis did not laugh.

Bill, Mr. Davis' foreman, stopped by the office before leaving. "Everyone's been paid, sir, and the power's off. Will there be anything else?" He stood there expectantly, dusty khakis showing evidence of a hard day's work.

"No, Bill. Here's your paycheck." Mr. Davis handed him a crinkly tan envelope. "Don't worry about the front door. I'll tend to it later."

"Thank you sir. Have a nice weekend." This was said with sincerity. Bill walked out of the office door. Mr. Davis counted his steps down the hallway. They were sturdy and sure. "Although I may not have Grade A tobacco," rationalized Mr. Davis, "I certainly have a Grade A foreman."

The building was silent. Mr. Davis reached into the desk drawer and pulled out his ledger. The silence was monotonous. He began humming bits of songs to himself as he leafed through the book.

"O darn! Now's when I wish Forrest were here. He was a pain-in-the-neck as a partner, but he could handle the books."

Mr. Davis tired quickly of the ledger. He laid it aside and began doodling on the telephone pad. His thought dwelled upon the morning's conversation



with the bank president. Mr. Jones, as an old friend, had advised him to close down the cigar factory while he still owned his shirt. Mr. Davis' pride had flared up and he had spoken rather sharply. Finally he had ushered Mr. Jones out of the office rather unceremoniously.

The telephone pad filled with sketches as Mr. Davis' mind wandered. A blue-ribboned teddy bear sat with crossed legs, winking at a pink-frocked angel overhead. Pink candy canes leaned against a tree of blue lollipops. Ribbons tied in bows and knots of every description decorated the page.

"Hmm, I wonder" said Mr. Davis softly as he thought of his wife's words and scrutinized the figures on the pad. "Most people judge by the outward appearance anyway. Hmm . . . I wonder if Bob Depeugh could leave his work at Huntsville long enough to help an old fraternity brother. If anyone would know how to turn brown tobacco leaves blue and pink, it'd be Bob. Hmm . . ." Mr. Davis reached for the telephone.

A week passed and Elizabeth's baby came. Jack and June were among the first at the hospital to welcome the new arrival and congratulate the proud parents.

"Hey Charlie! I hear you have a new girlfriend and want to know how Liz is taking it." Jack guffawed loudly and slapped his friend on the back. Together they hastened from the reception room toward room 114. June was already hugging Elizabeth when they arrived.

"Oh, Liz, I'm so happy for you! Janet is such a joy to us. I know you'll love having a little girl."

Elizabeth smiled. "Um-huh. Now Charlie has a cheerleader as well as a football player." She smiled at her husband.

June looked at Jack, received his "okay", and proceeded. "Liz, I can't wait another minute before giving you a little gift. It's something Jack made himself. I think you'll love it." At that she withdrew from her pocket a small glass case covered with teddy bears, angels, and ribbon. Through the designs there showed a dainty pink cigar cushioned on a wad of fluffy cotton.

"June, it's adorable!" whispered Liz. "Oh, I want to keep it like this forever." In the meantime Charlie began puffing on a pink-leafed cigar.

"Jack, my boy, you'll make a million if you put these on the market. How in the world did you think of something like this?"

"Oh, it really wasn't too hard. I really give June a lot of credit for the idea." Jack paused to light a big, black cigar. "Now that you mention it, I've already signed a contract with America's biggest novelty company. You better come into the business with me, man, and support that new girlfriend in high fashion."

Smoke rings curled above the two men. A laughing teddy bear bombarded the pink-frocked angel with blue ribbons.



## There

*How quiet we walk—  
hand-in-hand there.  
By shivering naked trees—  
Stepping carefully on  
leaves of brown  
and winter gold.  
No sound there  
but soft rustles  
and thin twigs quivering.  
How quiet we walk  
There is quietness.*

—LLL



## The Night

*Much that is eerie, much that is weird,  
Much that makes chills play up and down one's backbone—  
These things belong in the domain of that sly miscreant—the night.*

*Watch him as he first makes his presence known each day.  
He slides stealthily in on the coattails of the departing sun,  
Clearing the way for imminent mischief,  
Seemingly encouraging his wicked associates to follow.*

*Under the shadow of his ghostly presence,  
The slinking cowards of the day assume fierce personalities,  
While they watch the grotesque shadows or listen to the unearthly moans of  
the wind.*

*Under the ebony cloak of darkness,  
Evil becomes adventure, sin becomes exciting,  
For the night shades the bald, bleakness of evil  
And his sombre cronies revel in the brief freedom of blackness.*

—Ellen Weldon

## Pity

*A goblin, a gremlin, there lives  
in the Kremlin,  
Those who are learning mathematics!  
Know-less and care-less, there lives  
in the U. S.  
Heroic, athletic fanatics.*

*A thistle, a missile, I'm hearing  
the whistle  
That tells me they're bombing my city.  
A crying, a dying, and people  
are sighing—  
"No tennis today, what a pity!"*

—Sandra Deer



## Nothing Bigger Than Yourself

*How is it in the stillness and quietness  
Where there is nothing bigger than  
Yourself; Under the darkness  
Where greater things are  
Hidden carefully in  
Silent places  
Carefully  
To reach out with gentle hands  
and pull you  
Under.*

—LLL



## Resurrection

*He stands in solitude, eyes cast  
Down in defeat. An iron hand  
Knocks him down. Heavy feet  
Crushed him into Earth*

*He lies on his back defeated.  
His eyes and thoughts drift up.  
An angel's wing brushes his face.  
He rises and stands defiant.*

—Beth Mason

# We Are the Children

*We are the children  
with no names:  
we wander  
through days  
grey-green and  
clouded with  
hopes  
fears  
misgivings  
searching  
for we know not  
what*

*We are the children  
with no faces:  
still we go on  
through this  
dark  
hazy  
infinity  
which is the end  
less  
night  
of our  
wandering*

*We are the children  
with no souls:  
and still we go on  
and for  
What  
When  
Why?*

—Carolyn Reynolds





## **and we say we wait**

*and we say we wait  
with open arms what about  
minds*

*we move on  
little dark-twisted  
streams of jealousy*

*we find pleasure in  
torturous exhilarating  
rapids of hate*

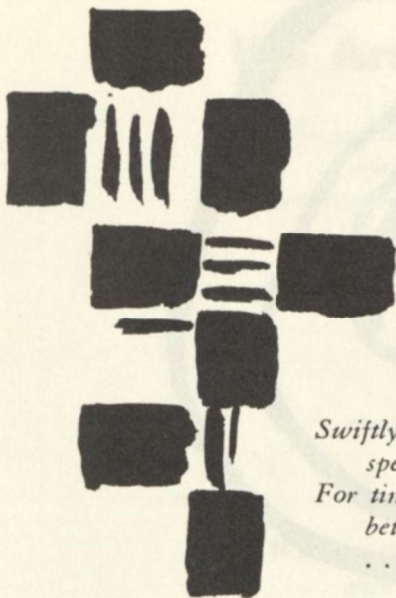
*we sing the  
treacherous ice falls  
of prejudice*

*we lose ourselves in  
deep comfortable  
mires of self*

*and  
always  
the subtle stolen from  
black night sea  
destruction  
of  
soul*

*and we say we wait . . .*

*—Carolyn Reynolds*



# There Is No Now

*Swiftly,  
speak and fly  
For time will be crushed  
between oblong dreams.  
... spiraled words  
and nothing ...  
borrowed torment  
thrown at an empty sky.*

*You ask us why?*

*Not why,  
only what.*

*A bongo beat and the search for It  
Life is the essence of  
intangible unattainable It,  
that governs a square peg in a  
round hole existence.*

*Hurriedly try to find it,  
only to discover there is no now.  
... yesterday never was, tomorrow never will be,  
there is no now ...*

*And love?*

*Love is geometric designs on a bedspread,  
no more, no less.*

*And Us?*

*We are the dregs of the world,  
in constant motion going nowhere  
Like leave us alone, man,  
So we in tennis shoes  
and \$11.00 suits may stride the earth,  
And lean against night,  
to cool it in our own way  
for there is no now.*

*—Carol Clay*



# Death of the Only Man Out

*Lie still there  
in the savage evening  
heat.*

*Mourn as smoke unfurls  
into the darkness.*

*Walls of the cave  
yawn and crouch  
to catch the red wink  
of light.*

*Lie quiet there  
on the tainted bed.  
Feel the ghost hand  
trembling through your hair;*

*The sweet taste  
of crushing shadow lips.*

*The cheek scar familiar then  
as your own body  
at your fingertips.*

*(Countless haunting faces  
breathe hotly in lust.  
Through the darkness  
your teasing laughter echoes.)*

*The glass is shattered  
by the heaviness of his footsteps—  
there in the cave faces crumble.*

*Quietly they step  
as the groom to the marriage bed.*

*(In agony  
of loneliness in passion  
for his ghost hand ghost mouth ghost scar  
shattered now with metal.)*

—LLL



